

Mr. CASEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM

Mr. CASEY. Madam President, I rise this afternoon to talk about the Children's Health Insurance Program and, particularly, the reauthorization of that program. By reauthorization I mean taking action to continue a program that is not just worthy but battle-tested now for almost a quarter of a century nationally, at least 20 years. In States like Pennsylvania, it is more than 20 years, more like 25.

The unfortunate reality, though, is this isn't done. This program should have been reauthorized at the end of September, and it is not done yet. It has gone from unacceptable to inexcusable. We should not leave this week without either having it reauthorized or having a game plan that would guarantee it will be reauthorized in the very early days of 2018, literally, the early days of January.

In just the last 2 weeks, I met with families across Pennsylvania and even families that came from beyond Pennsylvania here to Washington to talk about what the Children's Health Insurance Program means to them.

CHIP provides health insurance to some 9 million American children each year, including over 342,000 children in Pennsylvania, if you look at it over the course of the year. As you might recall, when the CHIP program expired on September 30, there were a lot of indications or promises made that it would be reauthorized rather soon, but that was 81 days ago. Whether you want to express it in days or months—81 days or 2½ months or more now—that is inexcusable. We have to get this done for these families.

I just saw a report this morning on "NBC News" that profiled a family. They were talking in this case to the mom and talking to her children, and it was a very moving story about the importance of the Children's Health Insurance Program and what would happen to that family if the program were not reauthorized.

This is a bipartisan program. It was bipartisan in its inception in the mid-1990s, and it has remained bipartisan. Now there is only one party that runs the House, the Senate, and the administration, and I hope that this one party—in this case, the Republican Party—can get the votes. You don't even have to talk about votes. It is really talking about floor time and really making sure there is an agreement on a pay-for.

The most recent action by the Finance Committee on CHIP was in the Keep Kids' Insurance Dependable and Secure Act, known by the acronym KIDS. The KIDS Act came through the Finance Committee by a voice vote.

That almost never happens, even on reauthorization. There was a voice vote on October 4. It seems like a long time ago now. It is ready to go. If it came onto the Senate floor, we can pass it here. I have to ask: Why isn't that happening?

Maybe the better person to ask that question would be a family who is benefiting and who could be harmed if it is not reauthorized. I am thinking about Connie, a woman I met here in Washington just last week. Then, I saw her again on Monday in Pittsburgh at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh. That is one of those great institutions for children across our country. She was there with two of her children. Carmen and Diego are both on the CHIP program. CHIP provides good health insurance so that they can get the healthcare they need.

I had a picture with Connie's daughter Carmen here in Washington. She dutifully handed me a copy of the picture when I saw her just a few days later in Pittsburgh at Children's Hospital.

Both Carmen and Diego might lose their health insurance because there is a lot of activity here and focus and a result when it comes to a big tax bill. In this case, it is a tax bill that gives permanent corporate tax cuts to multinational, profitable corporations. At the same time, there is almost no action or any sense of momentum right now to get the Children's Health Insurance Program in place again, or reauthorized, as we call it.

We had an event here in Washington yesterday where not only were there child advocates but so many others coming together to talk about this program. Maybe the most important thing we did yesterday, in addition to the mechanics, was to talk about the children in the room. Here are the children and the States they came from. I will just read through them quickly: Jason and Kelsey from Utah; Deanna came from New York; Malachi came from Colorado; Addie and Cailin from Kentucky; Patience, Serenity, Tyler, and Harmonie, all from the State of Texas; Jeridan, Kendra, and Makayla from the State of Wisconsin; and, finally, another Michaela—spelled a different way—and Grace came from the State of West Virginia. They and their parents—these children and their parents—spoke about what CHIP means to their families. Several of the parents said CHIP means their children can get the prescription eyeglasses they need.

I have to ask: How is a child supposed to learn and succeed in school without eyeglasses? CHIP provides that.

So while these kids don't know if they are going to be able to get the glasses they need to be able to read and to learn, the Senate is busy passing a tax bill. It is OK to pass a tax bill, even if I didn't agree with it, but we should find the time in the remaining hours of this year to get CHIP done.

I saw a tweet just 2 days ago that said the following: "Congress must

renew funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program so the parents of the nine million children who are covered by CHIP can know their children's healthcare is secure."

The good news about that tweet is, it was a Member of Congress. The even better news is, it was a Senator. Better news even than that, the Senator happened to be the Senate majority leader, Senator MCCONNELL.

I ask Senator MCCONNELL, please allow floor time and please obtain the consensus you need in your own party to get this on to the floor and get it passed.

As I said, the KIDS Act, the Finance Committee bill, is ready to go. I ask for the majority leader's help because I know he cares about this program as well. We have to get this done.

Just a final note before I yield the floor. I wanted to note several other healthcare priorities that Congress must address.

Community health centers are facing a funding cliff that will hurt millions of people around the country, and over 800,000 in Pennsylvania whom they serve, and other priority community health centers. Medicare extenders—meaning tax provisions that are extended from one year to the next or from one year into the future—including support for rural hospitals and lifting the so-called therapy cap to ensure seniors and people with disabilities have access to physical and occupational therapy services have also expired, just like the CHIP program, or will expire at the end of this calendar year. Failing to address these extensions is also unacceptable and will harm our children, our seniors, and our communities.

So we have a lot of work to do in a short amount of time on all of these healthcare issues. I think we should start with voting on and reauthorizing the Children's Health Insurance Program for 9 million American children.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TAX REFORM BILL

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Madam President, last night—I guess, actually, early this morning—was a pretty historic time for us. Our final vote to approve the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act was a historic moment for America, and it was clearly a historic moment for my State of Alaska.

For the first time in 31 years, since President Reagan was in office, we passed tax reform that will make our Tax Code work better for American families and businesses.